

DISPARITIES 08: Impacts of Institutional Racism

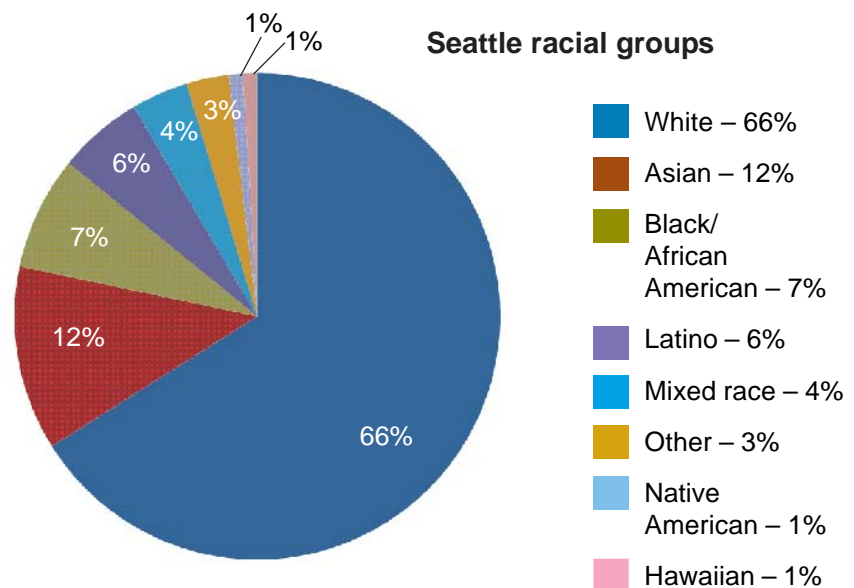
How does race matter? Does racism play a factor in the quality of life and access to opportunities and services in Seattle?

Seattle has worked for years to eliminate overt racist policies and practices in housing, employment and other areas. Yet people of color in our community continue to be impacted by systemic race-based biases. Institutional racism increases disparities in housing, employment, health care and other areas.

Snapshot of Seattle's racial composition

The populations of Seattle and King County are predominantly white. People of color account for just under a third of the total population.

U.S. Census Bureau,
2006 American Community Survey

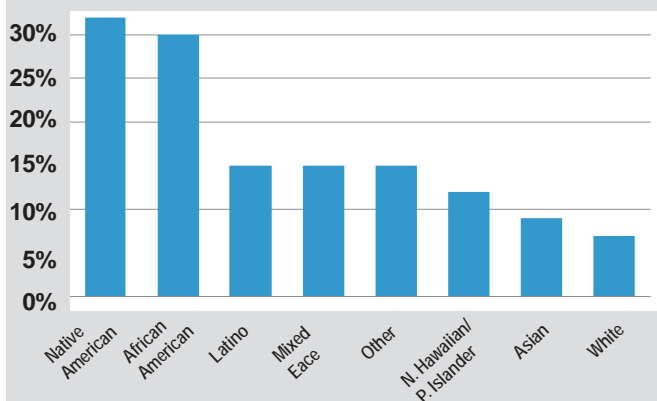


Access to Money and Resources

Income Disparities and Poverty

Income helps determine a person or family's financial security. A landmark report issued in 2007 by the Women's Funding Alliance reveals a

2006 poverty rate in King Co. by race



striking gap between the wages of white men and wages earned by women of color in the Puget Sound Region.

Latina women earn only a little over half of what white men receive: Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander women earn 59%; Native American women earn 61%; and African American women earn only 63%.¹

A small amount of money can mean the difference between paying for rent and paying for groceries or gas. Income inequity can have a domino-effect on communities of color – pushing many families into poverty.

Wage disparities and the lack of family wage jobs contribute to the disproportionate number of people of color who live in poverty in Seattle.²

Access to Affordable Healthcare and a Healthy Environment

A healthy society is one in which residents can seek out affordable preventative health care, receive needed medication and live free from major sources of pollutants.

Race-based disparities in health can be linked to institutional racism in health care and care-giving.

Diabetes

In King County, African Americans are 2.6 times more likely to be affected by diabetes than whites, and have a death rate from diabetes 3.3 times higher than whites.³

Pacific Islanders have the highest diabetes prevalence of any racial/ethnic group in King County, more than three times higher than whites.⁴

Death rates for diabetes varied depending on geography. Death rates for diabetes in King County were the highest in Southeast Seattle (39.7%) home to the city's highest percentage of people of color. Mercer Island had the lowest rate at 9.7%.⁵

Asthma

The highest rates of asthma hospitalization are found in Beacon Hill/Southeast Seattle, Downtown/Central Seattle, and some South King County communities.⁶

The asthma rate in Beacon Hill/Southeast Seattle, a community with a high concentration of

residents of color was 6.5 times that of Vashon Island, a primarily white community.

For adults, the prevalence of asthma for American Indian/Alaska Native is more than twice that of whites.⁷

Housing and Homelessness

Historic policies rooted in racism created unequal housing opportunities across the United States.

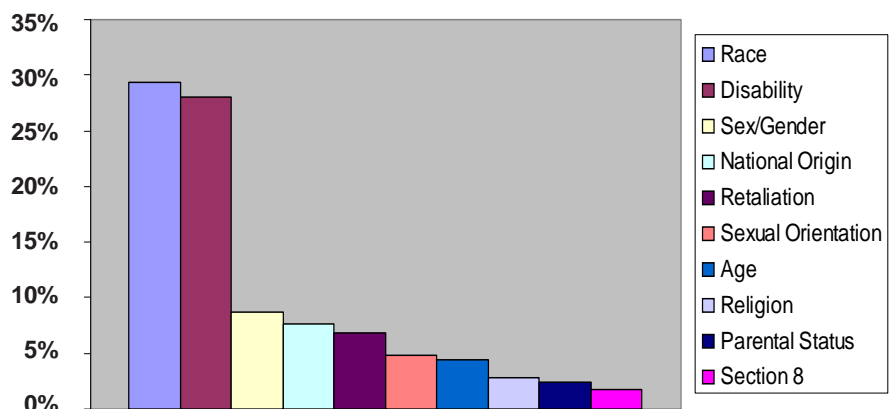
White residents continue to benefit from subsidized homeownership loan programs of the 1950's that were not offered equally to people of color. The equity from these homes contributed to the net wealth of white families, giving their children an extra economic advantage over people of color. Given the lack of affordable housing in Seattle, people of color are at a disadvantage when trying to find secure and stable housing.

People of color make up a disproportionate number of Seattle's residents who are homeless. People of color account for about 27% of King County residents, but they make up roughly 57% of those who are homeless.⁸

Employment and Housing Discrimination

Discrimination based on race is a reality for people of color. In 2007, nearly a third of all charges of illegal discrimination filed with the Seattle Office for Civil Rights were based on a person's race. The allegations included discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations.

Top ten discrimination charges filed in 2007 by protected class



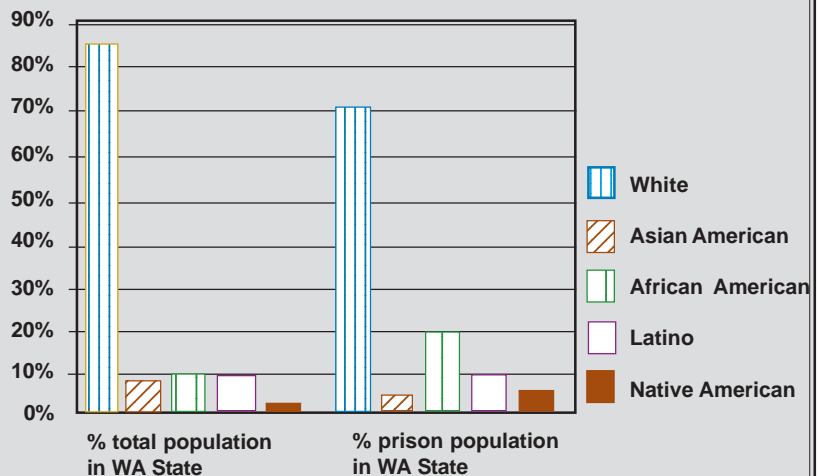
Equal Access to Justice

People of color comprise a disproportionate number of those incarcerated in Washington State. While African Americans make up only 3.2% of Washington's overall population, they account for 19.2%, or one-fifth of the state's prison population.⁹ Native Americans are also overly represented in Washington prisons. Native Americans comprise only 1.6% of the total state population¹⁰ yet they account for 4.5% of those incarcerated in Washington prisons.¹¹

As part of the City's efforts to address Race and Social Justice, the City conducts a community survey every two years to measure public opinion of the Seattle Police Department to better inform Police Department

practices. The survey also examines individual perceptions among various communities of color toward Seattle Police. Generally, these surveys have shown that communities of color expressed higher levels of concern about police conduct and racial profiling.¹²

Prison population by race in WA State

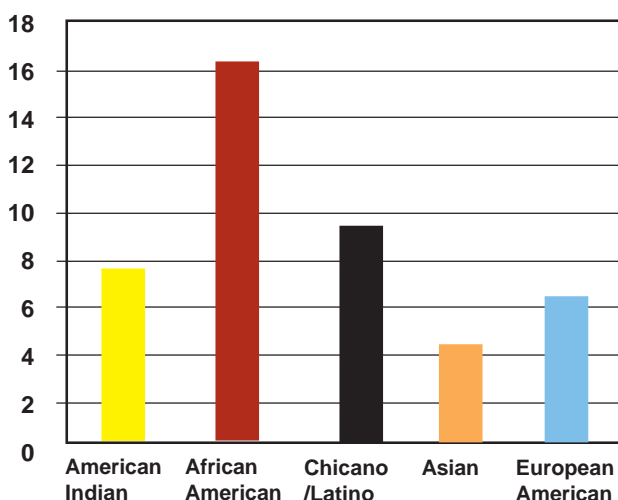


Are we making the grade in education?

Are we making the grade when it comes to meeting the educational needs of young people? Research has shown that students will achieve if given the opportunity to be taught by numerous effective teachers in a row. Yet between 1999 and 2000, 32% of Washington's secondary

classes in schools with high numbers of students of color were taught by teachers who did not specialize in the field they were teaching. The impacts of these practices, along with the current level of investment in education, contribute to inequitable educational outcomes for our children.

Short-term suspensions in Seattle schools



In Seattle public schools, rates of high school completion are higher for white students than most students of color. In 2005, only 42% of Native American students, 43% of Latino students and 47% of African American students completed high school, compared to 67% of their white counterparts and 70% of Asian American students.¹³ The rates of graduation for Asian American students vary further if the data is broken down into ethnic groups.

Rates of discipline also are racially disproportionate in Seattle public high schools. In 2005, 16% of African American students received short-term suspensions, compared to 6% of white students, despite the fact that white students accounted for 40% of the high school student body compared to 23% of African American students.¹⁴

Race-based disparities within City of Seattle government

Disparities in workforce equity

Within the City of Seattle, people of color comprise 34.4% of the overall workforce – a reflection of the city's ethnic diversity. Yet a closer look at some specific job categories reveals disproportionate representation by race.¹⁵

While white employees make up 65% of the total workforce, they account for 73% among City officials and administrators.

The City has a much higher percentage of all employees of color working in the two lowest paid job categories compared to whites.

Though the City has removed barriers for entry-level positions, the disproportionality in higher level positions points out the importance of strategies to promote upward mobility. For example:

- African Americans comprise 24.3% of general labor and similar positions, 20.5% of the City's clerical and office support positions and 19.1% of accounting and finance support positions, with lower representation in management and professional categories.
- Asian Americans account for 47.7% of the City's accounting and finance professionals,

and 40.9% of accounting and finance support employees.

- Latinos are most represented within general labor and similar positions within the City, comprising 8% of these jobs.
- Native Americans also are clustered in positions of general labor, comprising 4.8% of the staff in these positions.

Disparities in the City of Seattle's contracting practices

Between 2003 and 2007, the percentage of the City's contracts with women and minority business enterprises (WMBEs) for purchases and consulting more than doubled, from 5.3% to 11.4%. The growth in City dollars to WMBEs increased from \$16.8 million in 2003 to \$42.4 million in 2007. At the same time, the percentage of purchasing and consulting dollars to African American, Latino and Native American firms has increased only marginally since 2003. Spending for African American, Latino and Native American firms has persisted at about 1% or less since 2003.¹⁶

Sources

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